



**United States Air Force
Memorial Dedication Ceremony
As delivered by
Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld
Arlington, VA, Saturday, October 14, 2006**

Captain Bob Schieffer. I like to think of him that way. Bob, thank you so much.

Chaplain, President Bush, Mrs. Bush, thank you so much for being here. Secretary Wynne and General Moseley, Chief Master Sergeant McKinley. My thanks to each of you for all you do for our Air Force and our country.

General Pete Pace is sitting out here. Pete, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. Thank you for being here.

Ross Perot, Jr. and General Grillo, members of the Air Force Memorial Foundation. Thank you for making this day possible. We appreciate it.

To the Medal of Honor recipients who are here, we thank you for your gallant service to our nation. God bless you all. Members of the military and senior officials, distinguished guests, and ladies and gentlemen.

If I may say a special word of thanks to Mr. Ross Perot, Sr., who is sitting down here, with a hat and sunglasses I see. Every time I turn around I find some good work he is doing for someone in the armed forces, and we appreciate it, Ross, thank you.

You know, as we watch those old airplanes come crossing over here, I thought to myself, we ought to at least have stand the former Secretaries of Defense; Frank Carlucci's here, the former secretaries of the Air Force -- Pete Aldridge, Jim Roche, Tom Reed and others. Possibly the Chiefs of Staff of the Air Force, Lew Allen and Ron Fogleman, I see sitting out here. Mike Ryan, John Jumper and I think Tony McPeak. Would you all stand along with all of the Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force that are here. And Davy Jones back there, my golly, the former Chief and the former Chairman. Hello, Davy. I'm sure I missed somebody and I apologize, but these folks had an awful lot to do with those airplanes, and God bless them for it.

You know, it's not a coincidence that the world's first airplane took to the skies over America, for no country better embodies the spirit of aviation. Ours is a nation borne of pioneers and perseverance. Eager to embrace innovation and always striving upward in search of new horizons.

For generations, American children came of age enthralled:

- By the legends of daring dog fights in the First World War;
- By the brave young men who raced off to England even before the United States entered World War II;
- By that country boy from West Virginia who ended up flying faster than the speed of sound;
- By a space race between two superpowers, with our hopes hung on the brilliance and the bravery of the men who piloted our country into new frontiers and onto the moon.

So today it's fitting that here -- not far from those wonderful monuments and memorials -- that we pay tribute to the giants of the past. We commemorate the aviators who captured our country's imagination, who have proved critical to the defense of our nation, time and again. And who have been among the world's most important instruments of liberation and victory.

Today, in another hour of testing, airmen and women are helping to keep our country safe, and making ours a world more free.

Leading these efforts is a former aviator, one who on a dark day, stood atop the rubble of lower Manhattan assuring a grieving nation that we will never forget the wound inflicted on our people. A president, who I can personally attest, has never wavered, never tired, never faltered in his resolve to protect the American people and our free way of life.

Men and women of the armed forces. Ladies and gentlemen, veterans, it's a high honor to present the President of the United States, our Commander-in-Chief, George W. Bush.